

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 18745

E.O. 11652: XGDS-3
TAGS: SOPN, EG, IS, UR, XF, SY
SUBJ: SOVIET DIPLOMAT AND PRESS ON MIDDLE EAST

SUMMARY: CONVERSATION WITH SOVIET DIPLOMAT AND TWO LENGTHY
PRESS COMMENTARIES DEVELOP THEME OF SOVIET CONCERN OVER
THE CONSEQUENCES OF A SEPARATE SETTLEMENT BETWEEN EGYPT
AND ISRAEL, WARNING THAT SUCH A SETTLEMENT COULD ONLY BE
REGARDED AS AN ARMISTICE WITH WOULD HAVE NEGATIVE LONG-
TERM CONSEQUENCES. END SUMMARY.

1. IN A CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF ON DECEMBER 28, COUNSELOR,
MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES DEPARTMENT, A. I. FILEV, EMPHASIZED
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SOVIET CONCERN OVER THE COURSE OF THE SADAT-BEGIN
TALKS AND THE NEED TO WORK TOWARD THE RECONVENING OF
THE GENEVA CONFERENCE. AS HIS MAJOR THEME FILEV TWICE
STATED THAT EGYPT AND ISRAEL MAY BE ABLE TO CONCLUDE
A SEPARATE SETTLEMENT BUT THIS WOULD ONLY CONSTITUTE
AN ARMISTICE AND NOT PEACE. HE STATED FURTHER THAT
A SEPARATE PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST COULD LEAD TO

"THE MOST NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES". WHEN ASKED WHAT SPECIFIC CONSEQUENCES HE ENVISAGED, FILEV STATED THAT THERE IS A BROADLY ACCEPTED VIEW THAT THE STEP-BY-STEP NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN EGYPT AND ISRAEL, WHICH PRODUCED THE SINAI ACCORDS, HAD LET DIRECTLY TO THE CIVIL WAR IN LEBANON.

2. ON GENEVA, FILEV STATED THAT A CONFERENCE THERE CAN ONLY TAKE PLACE ON THE TERMS WHICH BREZHNEV ENUMERATED IN HIS DECEMBER 24 PRAVDA INTERVIEW. FILEV ASKED RHETORICALLY WHEY THE BEGIN PLAN COULD NOT HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED AT GENEVA -- NOT AS THE BASIS FOR A RECONVENED CONFERENCE THERE BUT AS ONE OF A NUMBER OF PROPOSALS RAISED BY THE INTERESTED PARTIES. THE SOVIET UNION, HE STATED, WOULD NOT ALLOW THE GENEVA CONFERENCE TO BE USED TO RATIFY A SEPARATE ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN PEACE.

3. ON OTHER SUBJECTS FILEV INDICATED THAT THE TRIPOLI MEETING WAS A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION IN ESTABLISHING ARAB UNITY. HE DID NOT RESPOND DIRECTLY TO A QUESTION ABOUT DISUNITY WITHIN THE ARAB WORLD. IN REPLY TO A QUESTION ON THE CURRENT VISIT OF THE SYRIAN CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF, FILEV MERELY COMMENTED THAT SOVIET-SYRIAN RELATIONS ARE GOOD. FILEV ASKED WHETHER SECRETARY VANCE ENVISAGED PARTICIPATING AT CONFIDENTIAL

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ANY STAGE IN THE POLITICAL COMMITTEE ESTABLISHED DURING THE ISMAILIA TALKS AND WHETHER PRESIDENT CARTER WILL MEET WITH SYRIAN PRESIDENT ASSAD. HE WAS TOLD THAT THE EMBASSY DOES NOT HAVE INFORMATION AT THIS POINT ON EITHER SUBJECT.

4. THE SOVIET PRESS. THE PUBLIC SOVIET ASSESSMENT OF THE BEGIN-SADAT TALKS CONTINUES TO DEVELOP THE THEME OF EGYPTIAN FAILURE TO BREAK ISRAELI INTRANSIGENCE. IN IZVESTIYA OF DECEMBER 28 COMMENTATOR KONDRASHOV RISES TO THE OCCASION WITH AN INVECTIVE-FILLED PIECE DERIDING THE BEGIN PLAN FOR ITS "SELF-RULE" PROVISIONS WHICH ENVISAGE IMPOSING ON THE PALESTINIANS CONDITIONS SUCH AS EXIST IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH OR IN THE NEGRO GETTOES OF THE NORTH. SADAT'S INITIATIVE IS "A STILLBORN ENTERPRISE", ACCORDING TO THE AUTHOR, WHO ALSO HEAPS SCORN ON THE "AMERICAN-ISRAELI GAME," AND ON THE ISMAILIA MEETING ("ONCE AGAIN THE MOUNTAIN GIVES BIRTH TO A MOUSE"). BEHIND HIS PURPLE PROSE IS A CONCERN THAT THE U.S. AND ISRAEL WILL BE ABLE TO SPLIT THE ARAB WORLD AND EXTRACT A SEPARATE PEACE FROM EGYPT, WHICH WOULD

ESTABLISH NOTHING MORE THAN A "SHAKY ARMISTICE."

5. PRAVDA OF DECEMBER 29 PUBLISHES A SIMILARLY LENGTHY COMMENTARY BY P. DEMCHENKO WHICH, IN FAR LESS FLAMBOYANT DRESS, CONVEYS THE SAME DUAL MESSAGE OF FAILURE AT ISMAILIA AND OF THE SERIOUS DANGER OF A SEPARATE ISRAELI-EGYPTIAN SETTLEMENT. ACCUSING SADAT OF CAUSING A "DEEP SPLIT" IN THE ARAB WORLD AND ISRAEL OF TAKING A "HARSH, EXPANSIONIST POSITION", DEMCHENKO WARNS THAT WITHOUT ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL TO 1967 BORDERS AND SATISFACTION OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS, "GENUINE PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS IMPOSSIBLE".

6. COMMENT: IN STRESSING THE DANGERS OF A SEPARATE
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SETTLEMENT FOR THE MIDDLE EAST AT THE TIME WHEN THE SYRIANS ARE IN TOWN ARRANGING FOR MORE MILITARY AID, THE SOVIETS ARE PROBABLY ATTEMPTING TO SUGGEST THAT THEY STILL HAVE THE POTENTIAL FOR CONSIDERABLE IMPACT IN THE AREA.
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